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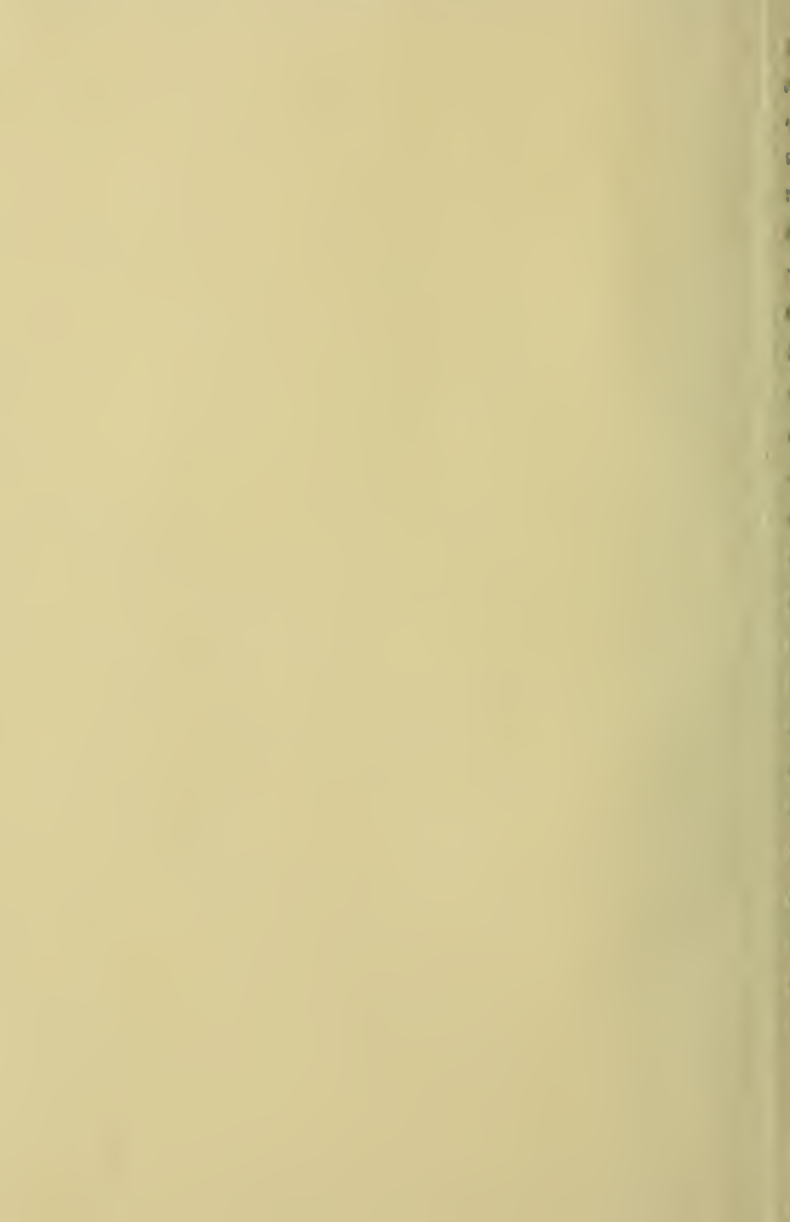
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A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE

532
Four Texan Giants.

THE

SHIELDS BROTHERS.

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OUR HISTORY.

IN presenting the reader this little history of myself and brothers, it will be remembered that persons reared in a frontier country, such as Texas, are not expected to be blessed with an education sufficient to be able to give a glowing account of themselves as it would be with one well educated; but, be it understood, just at this point, rough as I am, I am going to give the reader of this some facts concerning the TEXAS GIANT FAMILY and the Lone Star State. Never having attempted anything of the kind before, it will, probably, be the more interesting, from the fact that you are now reading the writer's first attempt at anything of the kind, and you can thereby assure yourself that he will deal in facts only, as he has neither the power nor the will to excite the reader's imagination by glowing descriptions of Indian massacres, of which he was the only one of the family who survived, and, after several years of captivity, made good his escape, or something of the kind; but it is my intention, as before stated, to give you the naked facts as they are. Hoping, with the foregoing remarks before our readers that they can see the surroundings of the writer clearly enough to realize the sad misfortune under which he labors, I will now proceed to to give you a brief history of our family. You will please pardon me for mentioning some facts in relation to our foreparents, as well as

OUR FATHER AND MOTHER.

Our mother's maiden name was Anderson. Her father, Starling Anderson was a man of fine form, 6 feet 6 inches high, and weighed 227 pounds; was of Irish parentage, though born and raised in America. His wife, strange as it may seem, was a very small women weighing about 105 pounds, of English descent, the only one of my grandparents whom I have any remembrance. The first account that I now have is that they were in the good old State of Georgia, in which State my grandfather died, leaving my grandmother the sole supporter and protector of five children—three sons and two daughters, (the youngest of which was my mother), with but little

help, except a few slaves, the exact number I don't recollect. She, with her little family, in the year 1829, emigrated to Alabama, in which State my father and mother were married on the 25th day of December, 1835.

I have given you a brief outline of my mother's parents; I will now give you a few words concerning my father and his parents. My grandfather Shields was a man between $6\frac{1}{2}$ and 7 feet. I don't know his weight. My grandmother Shields was a very large woman, weighing something over 200 pounds; so you will see that we came from a family of very large people; our foreparents all being very large as well as our father and mother. Our father being a man 6 feet and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches; our mother being over the medium height and weighing over 200 pounds, and the fact that presents itself to the reader's mind is, that we are from a family of Giants and not a freak of Nature, as is the case with most of the Giants now on exhibition. But to return to the subject of my father's whereabouts in his youth. He, also, was born in the State of Georgia; moving to Alabama with his father at a very early age—perhaps about the year 1818 or 1819, which was, at that time a wilderness and frontier, there being plenty of Indians. I think this will suffice for that branch of the subject, so I will give you a history of ourselves, which, from the fact that we are all young, will necessarily be short, plain and simple. In attempting to give you our history, I will, also, give you some items concerning the seven of us.

There are seven brothers in all; never having been blessed with a sister to make it a place of pleasure and comfort, which task was left for our dear old mother who now lies quietly resting under the sod on one of the beautiful flower-decked prairies of our good and noble State—Texas—where her spirit, reposing, as we trust, and basking in the heavenly breezes on the other shore:

Gone to heaven, there to rest
And sing sweet songs forever bless'd.

Now the reader may think it somewhat strange that a frontiersman could have so much affection for a mother, but those who have been so unfortunate as to lose a kind and loving mother, can fully realize the feelings which prompt me in penning a few words concerning that one. It is a fact that I have learned, that in a great many States there are very erroneous opinions concerning the people of Texas, which opinions I will try to set aright, in their proper place and time.

As before stated, there are seven boys, all of gigantic proportion. The four you now see being the youngest of the seven. The three older ones being still on their farms in Texas, not wishing to lead the roaming life which we have chosen. Of our early youth there can not be much said of interest, only that we were, from early age, very tall, and so much so that we were greeted by our schoolmates by a yell of "How are you, legs?" or something of that kind. It is true we received an education which was very limited, owing to the surrounding circumstances, which will be plainly seen as to myself by the reader of this little book; but I shall write this as though I were writing to a friend.

Our father was a farmer; one that tilled the soil for support, though it is a fact that he raised some cattle, horses and hogs, but depended for support for himself and family principally on the products of the ground. We were, therefore, accustomed to hard labor during our early life. Our good and kind father at the same time giving his seven boys a chance to gain a limited education—though some of us did not improve our chance to much advantage; being of a rather wild turn of mind; choosing the open air of the health-giving prairies in preference to the solitude of the log cabin schoolhouse, such as Texas was once noted for, there confined and condemned to worry our patience and life out, as well as the amplest parts of our trousers on the then Texas schoolbench, which was very simple in mechanism, consisting of a log—generally an elm, cut the proper length and split open. One log would make two benches. Peel the bark off; smooth off the splinters; bore four holes—two at each end with a two-inch auger; insert four pegs about 18 inches long; turn the flat side up; then we had a splendid trouser-spoiler and a genuine boy-killer—and a girl killer too, I suppose, though never having been a girl, could not say.

Perhaps it would be of interest to our readers to give them a more minute description of the log cabin schoolhouse, in which some of us gained the greater part of our education. It was simply a log house; or I might with as much propriety say a log hut; necessarily very small, on account of the timber in this part of the State being very scarce and short; so the hut had to be built in proportion to the length of the timber, some fourteen, some fifteen, and some as large as sixteen feet square; the larger ones being built, perhaps, by some one of a more ingenious mind who could plan better than others. Now, you may think it somewhat strange that there is any skill in building

a log house larger, but nevertheless, it is a fact. I will give you the plan. They were built with an old-fashioned chimney, known as dirt and stick chimney, with a large fire-place, and, generally, a door on each side and window in the end, so the most of the logs are short, reaching from the several openings to the corners, and by this means a larger house can be built of logs of very inferior kind. I will say just here, that it was in one of these Temples of Education that one of my brothers was attending school, taught by a splendid little man by the name of Evans, who was a very weakly man, so much so that his pupils were not at all afraid of him; and some of the pranks played on him were too bad. The one I will make mention of was that played by the brother I spoke of. He had disobeyed some of the teacher's rules and was promised that the next morning he would receive payment in full. So Frank, as that is the name of the one I am speaking of now, made his way to the schoolhouse before the teacher arrived and took the teacher's switch, or rather, pole, for he was noted for never fooling his time away with anything less than about ten feet long, and dug a hole in the ground, planted it, and grafted another onto it, making it a great deal longer than a common fishing rod, and left it, he said, to grow. Now, imagine the indignation of that little red-headed man as he viewed the ground where his dear old pole had been planted. So he raved and ranted and the punishment he inflicted was to promote him to the office of assistant teacher. This same brother Frank was of a mischievous disposition, playing all kinds of pranks, such as penning the old goats and leaving the young ones in, would go and milk the old ones. On seeing the grown people kill hogs by striking them on the head with an ax, he goes to his mother's gourd-patch and with the assistance of a small negro to hold the hogs, as they called the gourds, while he would strike the gourd on the bottom and burst a hole in it, thereby ruining it. On seeing sheep being sheared, he took all that were less than himself, being two brothers and six or seven little negroes, away from the house and sheared them, the whole gang standing round laughing and bleating with all their might while he was shearing.

As I have given you some incidents concerning Frank's youth, I will give you some facts about him up to the present. He was reared on the farm as was all of us. There he learned to plow the ground, plant, make rails, in fact, anything that came to hand on the farm, except to be anything of a mechanic, for in this he was entirely lacking. He could not even make a hoe-handle nor do anything that required the use of tools, though being willing and ready always to do his part of any labor that was to be performed. He staved with our father until he was twenty years old, at which age our father would set us free, as it is called, at which time he contracted with our father to make a crop, which he did with some success; after which he was married to one of the daughters of the Lone Star State; bought a farm of his own on which he farmed for some time up till he was induced to sell out and go to New York and place himself on exhibition for G. B. Bunnell, in his Museum, at corner of Ninth and Broadway, where Jack was on exhibition, and remained there six months. From there he went, in company with the other three of us, to Boston, Massachusetts, to the New Dime Museum then under the management

of Bristol and Andrews, at which place he was reunited with his wife and two children after a greivous parting some seven months before in Texas, which meeting was one of joy to father, mother, and children. Leaving Boston, we went to the Baltimore Museum for D. Herzog, where we remained all the 18th day of December, 1882, when we concluded to spend the Christmas holidays in Texas among our friends and relatives.

Jack being next in order, I must admit that in writing of him I will be compelled to say that he, as well as myself, was not a very dear lover of hard labor, and not being of a stout constitution our father gave him a better education than any of the four younger boys, also giving him his freedom at an early age. In the year 1879, I believe, he was induced to go with the Great London circus which came into Texas.

On leaving home in company with myself and two friends and going to Bonham, in Fannin county, Texas, which was a distance of 32 miles, no one knew of any intention that he had of going with the show. He said on the way that he believed he would make an engagement with the manager and go on exhibition as a Giant, to which we paid as little heed as to many other remarks that were made as we sped on in our headlong flight on our two-horse wagon, over muddy roads; but to my surprise he made an engagement to travel with the circus as a Texas Giant. Owing to the near approach of the close of the season he did not stay with the show but a short while, when he returned home to make a short visit. After a few letters passed between himself and J. L. Hutchinson, he made an engagement to go on exhibition for him in the city of New York. He was on exhibition for Mr. Hutchinson for several months, when he again returned home—but just here I must mention one fact that I feel is only just; that Mr. Hutchinson treated Jack as a brother during a case of measles that confined him to his bed for six long weeks, during which time he provided a physician and nurse and for which Jack now returns his thanks and extends his kindest wishes for his success. As I before stated, after filling his engagement he again came home, being tired of that kind of life. He thought of home and the comforts of home, so he concluded to have a home, and, as a matter of course, a home without a wife would be comfortless, he made choice of a fair daughter of Texas—one he had known from his youth up. They were married and he embarked in the grocery business, which he soon found was a failure; then he again turned his mind museumward, it being a very easy task for him to make an engagement. He engaged with G. B. Bunnell to exhibit in his Museum in New York city and Brooklyn, being part of the time on Coney Island. After he had been with G. B. Bunnell a short time he made known the fact to his "boss" that he was one of seven brothers, all of whom were of gigantic size. Mr. Bunnell being a man of vast experience in the business of exhibiting curiosities, saw the point, so to speak, and had Jack write for another of his brothers; then one after another, until the four now on exhibition were induced to leave their homes and friends, who are most dear to us, and go on exhibition to satisfy the many visitors who come to the show to see the **FOUR GREAT GIANT BROTHERS**.

Shade comes next, who is the third; and he was the third to engage

in the show business; Frank being the second; and as I was the last, and being the humble writer of this I shall write of myself last. Our good old father seeing it was to the interest of Shade to give him his freedom very early, he was, also, set at liberty at an early age. He being of farmerlike disposition, first tried the avocation to which he had been reared—that of farming—at which he was very successful, making a very good gain on his crops the first year, which so aroused his ambition for money-making that he looked for a better field for making money than tilling the rich, black land with which Texas abounds; so he undertook the saloon business, which did not coin money for him as fast as he had expected; so tiring of this, he, also, took the show-business fever and took his flight to New York to add the third to the number of Texas Giants.

Shade not finding one of the fair sex that exactly suited him or rather that he exactly suited, has never as yet known the blessedness of being a husband and father, but is still on the lookout for some fair one that he may suit.

Now comes the worst and hardest part of the history to write; that is of myself. I think that I am as clear of egotism as most people; and it will be a very timid task to give a few words in reference to myself; though to the task:

I, like the balance of my younger brothers, was set at liberty one year before the regular time of setting boys free. I concluded to try the old home one year longer; so I made a contract with my father to make a crop with him, but I, having a few "wild oats" to sow, in the summer sold out my crop to my father. My first money was made at work in a brickyard, and strange to say, and little did I think, for my future father-in-law, although things do turn out very strange.

I then, at the commencement of the next year, began to learn the business of a blacksmithing. I commenced with a man by the name of Pealer, who, after working a while in my old settlement, went to McKimmie, in Colin county. I worked there in the shop till along in the summer when the man with whom I had set in, took the western fever, and took a trip southwest and found the good place which you know is always ahead. So, after a short visit to my father and mother, we started for Coryell county, a distance of between two and three hundred miles, where I remained till December when I returned home to spend the Christmas holidays. On my return home I was induced to accept the humble position of assistant teacher in one of our Texas schools. After some experience as assistant I was offered full charge of another school which I accepted and managed, giving general satisfaction. After that I took other short terms, which were satisfactory in most cases. The experience I had in teaching, taught me that the man who takes charge of the youthful minds of our country has a responsibility resting on him that rests not on the shoulders of any other class.

The laws of Texas concerning schools underwent change after change, and, finally they were so arranged that the business was not lucrative enough to induce me to continue longer, so I withdrew from that humble, but honorable occupation, and then was favored with the election to the office of County Commissioner, which office I was still filling to the best of my ability when I was induced to leave

home and friends and place myself on exhibition with my three brothers, making four on exhibition, which I suppose will be all that can be induced to leave their homes for the business of exhibition; the other three brothers, as I before stated, not being of that disposition.

Now young lady, if such the reader be, I would warn you just here, be sure you don't fall in love with the writer of this, for the fact is, I am a married man, possessing, as I think, one of the fairest of the fair sex; though that is only my opinion, a conviction that finds a resting place in the bosom of every man who is blessed with such a favor.

My first appearance as a Giant was with Mr. Brattenburg, in his Museum on the Bowery, in the city of New York, in the Fall of 1882. After filling my engagement with him, the four of us, now known as the Four Texas Giant Brothers, were on exhibition for G. B. Bunnell, in Brooklyn, and at his Museum, corner of 19th street and Broadway, New York. From there we went to Boston, Mass., for Bristol & Andrews, at the New Dime Museum, at Horticultural Hall, on Tremont street. From there we went to Baltimore, Md., for D. Herzog, in the Baltimore Museum, on West Baltimore street, at which time, as the Christmas holidays were approaching, we refused any further engagements—which was very hard to do,—and started for our far-off home in Texas, and there remained till we started out in the Spring to join the side-show which was to accompany P. T. Barnum's circus for the season of 1883.

Now if our little history, short and simple as it has been, has satisfied the curiosity aroused in your mind on seeing us, to know something of our past history, then my aim is accomplished, and as a few words concerning the so-called "noble red man" of the West may be of interest, I will mention a few facts in regard to this much over-rated brute—if I am allowed to speak thus. In speaking of an Indian, I have reference only to the wild tribes as they now exist in their uncivilized state, and as the Camanches are the most noted tribe of this kind I will endeavor to drop a few remarks in reference to them, which, on account of the smallness of this little book, will be short. The Camanches are supposed to be a branch or subdivision of the Shoshone or Snake Nation, who, under various names or tribal appellations dominate the entire area from the borders of British America to the Rio Grande. Although these tribes are known by many different names, such as Shoshones, Bonacks, Utahs, Lipans, Apaches, Navajoes, Pawnee-Picts, Camanches or Cayguas, they vary very little in their general customs. Until within a few years the Camanches were, without doubt, the most warlike and powerful tribe of Indians on the continent. With the Apaches, Navajoes and Lipans they formed a sort of Indian confederacy, rarely at war among themselves, but always with the white man; and when united, they were able to put a force in the field that would ride over a Texas frontiersman like a whirlwind, and, without hesitation, penetrate hundreds of miles into Mexico, desolating whole provinces, returning sated with slaughter and burdened with plunder.

The marriage relations can hardly be said to exist among the Camanches. Each Chief or warrior, it is true, may have as many

wives as he pleases, and they generally have a very good number, but the tie is not sacred as with us, and no ceremony is required to legalize it. The Camanche procures his wife, or more properly his slave, by purchase, or, as by white captives, by force of arms, and disposes of her in the same manner. He has the same aversion to labor of any kind, which characterizes all aboriginal races. In the matter of diet he is by no means particular. One more fact I will mention concerning the red man: When a youth has arrived at the age of sixteen years it becomes necessary for him to "make his medicine." To this end he leaves his father's lodge and absents himself for one or two days and nights, entering the woods where he may be secure from interruption, seeks some quiet nook, and stretching himself upon the ground remains in that position until he dreams of his medicine. During this time he abstains from food and water. When in his dreams the bird or animal that is to be his guardian angel through life appears to him and he learns what to seek for, he retraces his steps and joins his family, who receive him with demonstrations of great joy. A feast is given in his honor, and he is treated with marked consideration. The festivities having come to an end, he arms himself with bow and arrow, or takes his traps, whichever may be best adapted to secure the animal he seeks, and, leaving the village once more, goes in pursuit of his quarry, not returning until his hunt has been crowned with success by procuring the animal sought for; the skin of which is stuffed and religiously sealed. This charm is usually attached to the person, and is sometimes carried in the hand.

The Indian will not sell his charm for any price. In battle he looks to it for protection from death, and if killed, expects it to conduct him safely into the happy hunting ground. As I stated in the first of this branch of the subject, I must be brief, so I must desist.

As there is an opinion extant concerning our "cowboys," I feel it my duty to say a few words which I promise will be but few.

The "Texas cowboy" is put down as a rough, rollicking, swearing dare-devil, anxious to get some person's blood. At home, where he is known this is not the idea of him; but abroad he is believed to be as black a fiend as pictured by the ignorant scribblers who so often write him up. He is as gentle as any man; looks like a very modest fellow, and acts the same way; but if his honor is tackled he will fight until death. He is brave, without braggadocia, and he must be brave to lead the fearless life he has chosen. Yet, he is not quarrelsome, and takes many minor insults before he resents. They have done more in developing the wealth of Texas than any other class of men. It is true they formerly carried a perfect arsenal on their person when the State had many bands of marauding indians; but that has past, as the laws of Texas have put a quietus on carrying firearms. It is true that some cowboys, like factorymen and railroad men, are quarrelsome, but the number of roughs is as limited as in any other class of men. The cowboy is generally underrated by the public for ign to Texas, and he is branded as a rough without a cause. Their friendship is enduring and they are always ready to give charity to all deserving poor. We ask our Northern friends to act slow in believing the blood-curdling stories often printed in their home papers and assigned to the depraved acts of cowboys.





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